

Young carers struggle to cope with bullying

Bullied, stressed and anxious – Young carers struggle to cope at school



The survey of 700 6-18 year olds who care for a sick or disabled family member, found that over a third (38%) worry about the person they care for when they are at school, while a quarter (23%) suffer from the stress of juggling school work and caring responsibilities. Other young carers surveyed experience tiredness, depression, and miss homework deadlines and school altogether.

A total of 70% agreed with the statement that “being a young carer has made their life more difficult”.

Danielle is 12 years old and cares for both her mum, who was diagnosed with fibromyalgia two years ago, and her dad who is epileptic. She explains how being a young carer affects her at school: “I’ve missed homework deadlines because I’ve been looking after my mum and dad. When I’m in class I worry that my parents are ok, especially my mum as I keep thinking she might fall over if she tries to walk and will hurt herself. If the class has been naughty and we are all kept after school for detention, I worry that I’ll be late. I get a lump in my throat when I think my mum might be worried waiting for me. It makes me feel sad.”

Many young carers feel that they are unsupported or misunderstood by their teachers who are often the first point of call in identifying young carers. Nearly half (39%) of the young carers questioned say there was not a single teacher at their school who knew they were a young carer, and of those whose teachers did know, more than half (52%) do not feel supported by them. Over three-fifths (60%) do not think their

teacher would understand what life was like for them.

To address these issues, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and The Children's Society will be launching Supporting Young Carers: a resource for schools, as well as a poster campaign to run in all secondary schools across the UK in May.

Carole Cochrane, Chief Executive at The Princess Royal Trust for Carers says: "It is shocking to discover that so many young carers have to endure bullying, mental health problems and a lack of support from their teachers, all because they care for a family member who is unable to cope without their help.

"Sadly, without the right support, many young carers will underachieve or drop out of school altogether, which has a long and enduring impact on their future prospects.

"The aim of this resource is to empower schools to start identifying and supporting young carers. We know that when school staff are involved in supporting young carers it can make a huge difference to their lives."

Bob Reitemeier, Chief Executive of The Children's Society says: "This resource will support schools to ensure that young carers are helped to achieve their full potential and to have the same access to education as their peers. "The resource will also encourage vital partnership working with other agencies in order to provide support for the whole family. We want to protect children from excessive inappropriate caring roles; enabling them to be children first and to have good childhoods."